

cia, estos *Cuentos reciclados* privilegian personajes con sustancia, es decir, capaces de relacionar sucesos. En una palabra, personajes con integridad. ¿Estamos ante un Pombo reciclado? El atento detalle al quehacer cotidiano parece haberle dejado de interesar por su mera intensidad o por no corresponder a nada en particular, como ocurría en *Relatos sobre la falta de sustancia*. Aunque sigue siendo reconocible su capacidad para describir las auras de los recintos y de los gestos cotidianos, éstos corresponden ahora a algo, están en función de la ética del personaje. Y esto también se debe a la invención del reciclaje.

ANA RUEDA

Alfonso Sastre. *The Abandoned Doll/Young Billy Tell*. Trans. Carys Evans-Corrales. Estreno, University Park PA, 1997, 67 pp.

Alfonso Sastre's *Historia de una muñeca abandonada* (1962) and *El hijo único de Guillermo Tell* (1980) represent significant contributions to a lively tradition of Spanish children's theater. These are highly visual and entertaining works, written with a tenderness and humor that are indeed likely to captivate the imagination and sensibility of a child. At the same time, Sastre has imbued these plays with the spirit of social protest and political activism that characterizes his «adult» works. In her translations, Carys Evans-Corrales has masterfully retained all the subtleties and intricacies of meaning that emerge in these plays, capturing the essence of this curious blend of politically-committed and children's theater traditions.

This is the tenth volume in *Estreno's* long-running series of Spanish plays in English translation. The volume contains a brief introductory note by Helen Manfull, who highlights the major themes that are treated in the plays and pays special attention to Sastre's Brechtian connections. Also included is a one-page note on Sastre (written by Evans-Corrales, one assumes), which highlights some of the playwright's most well-known works (*Escuadra hacia la muerte*, *Guillermo Tell*) within his artistic trajectory. The volume is rounded off with a couple of citations containing «critical reactions» from the popular press (*Ya* and *Diario 16*) regarding the 1989 production of *The Abandoned Doll*, two photographs pertaining to this production, and translator's notes which follow each individual play text. The information included in these supplementary sections is apt to be welcomed by both knowledgeable readers and those who are unfamiliar with Sastre's work. However, Evans-Corrales does not provide clear bibliographical information regarding the original sources of the translations and their publication. We are told however, in the introductory profile of Sastre, that the alterations made by Giorgio Strehler in his 1976 Italian production of *Historia de una muñeca abandonada* have

been incorporated into the «current version». While *El hijo único de Guillermo Tell*, according to Evans-Corrales, has not yet been staged, we learn from the photo credits that *Historia de una muñeca abandonada* was staged in 1989 at the María Guerrero National Theater under the direction of Xico Masó. Readers may have benefited from more detailed documentation regarding publication and productions.

*The Abandoned Doll* has an oddly asymmetrical structure containing two acts, three «oriental interludes» and an ending. It is a heavily metatheatrical work that enters into an intertextual dialogue with Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (which premiered in English in 1948). Both form and content can be traced to this Brechtian appropriation. As early as act one, there is self-conscious acknowledgment of Brecht's presence when a Balloon Lady is asked by a group of children to tell the story of the chalk circle that «Mr. Bertolt» wrote. Brecht's play, in part derived from a Chinese work pertaining to the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368), considers the political implications of a land dispute in the post-World War II Soviet Union. The dispute is played out in the form of an allegorical parable, set within the context of the thirteenth century, in which a custody battle over a small child is waged between two women: the governor's wife who gave birth to and, subsequently, abandoned the child, and the servant who saved the child and cared for him. Eventually an eccentric judge settles the conflict by placing the child within a chalk circle. When he asks the women to grab hold of the child and pull him from the circle, the servant, who fears she will do the child harm, lets the governor's wife win the competition. Brecht's play ends with an ironic twist when the servant, having exhibited greater love for the child than his natural mother, is awarded custody.

Sastre converts Brecht's plot into a twice-told tale whereby the spectator has the impression that he or she is seeing double. In the first version — in which the Balloon Lady narrates in Brechtian style — two young girls, the wealthy Carrie and the poor Jackie (Evans Corrales has adopted English names) fight for ownership of a doll which Carrie once abandoned, but now wishes to reclaim. The second version is played out during the three «oriental interludes», which are saturated with Brechtian strategies of alienation. A narrator and musicians who move «at a slow and dreamlike pace» and are dressed in «oriental style», in turbans and cardboard masks, facilitate the construction of a parallel dispute between Grusche and the governor's wife (characters from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*) over the custody of a small child. Throughout the play, poetic narration is interwoven with everyplay prose, and music, pantomime and lighting help to create self-conscious frames for both stories, which are distinguished by their contrasting endings. In the first version, Carrie (the figure of power and wealth) wins the dispute over the doll, a material possession endowed with human qualities. The second version, in contrast, is more faithful to Brecht's play: Grusche wins custody of the child by refusing to yank his arm. The final

result is an effect of distancing that may cause the spectator (young or old) to reflect objectively upon the ethical and political implications of each of the two conflicting endings.

*Young Billy Tell* is a reconsideration of the Swiss folk hero whose story Sastre portrayed in *Guillermo Tell tiene los ojos tristes* (1955) (and which Friedrich von Schiller also treated in *Wihelm Tell*, 1804). Sastre's more recent variation on the Tell theme is composed of nineteen short scenes, written entirely in verse — with the exception of a few non-verbal segments. The first and final scenes form a (rather overused) metatheatrical frame in which Spanish and Italian immigrant workers living in a contemporary present recover a lost manuscript, written by Billy, the son of William Tell. The framing, nonetheless, facilitates the spatio-temporal voyage, into a Switzerland of the past, that the young spectator is asked to undertake. Within this fictitious frame, the atmosphere acquires a carnivalesque air, whereby the audience's presence in the spectacle is referenced directly, especially in the scene that takes place «at the fair» in which a spectator is invited to play a game at a shooting gallery.

With regard to thematic content, *El hijo único de Guillermo Tell* contains an appealingly optimistic bent (especially for the young audience) whereby Sastre emphasizes the role of William's son Billy, his domestic family life, and child's perspective of the ensuing events. The story of William Tell is, in effect, focalized thorough his son's eyes. In addition, at the end of the play, unlike Sastre's previous version, the father hits his mark (the famous apple) and does not tragically shoot an arrow at his own son. William Tell is depicted as a symbol of patriotism: «a most revered marksman, / and a great citizen as well», but this symbolism is ironically played out in his battle against the «power structure». The Judge, for example, refers to him as «one of the greatest subversives of our days» an epithet that one can take to be either positive or negative, and which Sastre, presumably, views as a virtue. At the end of *El hijo único de Guillermo Tell*, we see a domestic scene of apparent role reversals in which William, donning an apron, cooks the family meal as his wife Hedwig sits at the table with Billy. As Manfull explains: «Not only does William Tell become a symbol of the rights of the humble citizen but he learns, through the complete trust his son offers him that ideals held in public must be practiced at home».

In both plays there are significant political references that further reinforce the parallels between Sastre and Brecht. In one instance, the Balloon Lady of *The Abandoned Doll* announces, «If you don't think like the dictators you get a very rough time of it, and that's what happened to Bertolt». The commentary, of course, is easily applicable to the case of Sastre. In *El hijo único de Guillermo Tell*, the Grandfather declares, «Freedom of speech is our cry, and human rights...» At another moment, a Marxist critique of materialist capitalism emerges when the narrator

proclaims: «The rage of the mighty / takes years to abate. / When the rich hate the poor / it's a burdensome state».

On the whole, Evans-Corrales should be praised for successful adaptation of Sastre's political discourse and his poetic verse, and for handling the constraints involved in translating a work for children. The volume should be of special interest to non-Spanish readers and to those, as yet, unacquainted with contemporary Spanish theater. It should provide theater directors and producers in the English-speaking world with exciting possibilities.

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Juan Pastor. *Paréntesis de tiempo, silencio y curvaturas (1975-1983)*. Madrid, Devenir, 1998, 110 pp.

Aunque cronológicamente Juan Pastor (Murcia, 1949) pertenece al grupo de los «novísimos», su poesía no exhibe el culturalismo y la misma distancia e indirección estética de sus coetáneos. No exenta de conexiones con la tradición poética, su voz poética no ha seguido la misma trayectoria que la corriente principal. Este hecho se constata en la presente colección, una selección de las primeras obras del poeta.

Pastor empieza su carrera poética con la publicación en 1975 de *Hasta que el tiempo los agote*. Por la brevedad de estos poemas, su estructura y el uso frecuente de exclamaciones, se nota la afición del poeta por la lírica de Juan Ramón Jiménez. De aquí en adelante hay un desarrollo de su propia voz poética. Casi se podría decir que el poeta lucha para librarse de lo que parece ser la camisa de fuerza de la tradición heredada. Todavía es notoria la influencia de Jiménez en los poemas de *Cuatro poemas y un silencio* (1976), pero la expresión es más extendida, como si el poeta estuviera tratando de estirarse. A lo largo de estos libros, el poeta hace una tentativa por eliminar todo contexto concreto o anecdótico, refiriéndose sólo oblicuamente a los incidentes o personas que motivaron el acto lírico. Por otra parte tampoco se vale de alusiones intertextuales o culturalistas para orientar al lector.

En los próximos dos libros, *«El» y la sombra del último viaje* (1980) y *Acibaf en el país de los Dádelos* (1981), se ve al poeta avanzando hacia una voz más propia y una expresión más alegórica, a la manera de William Blake y otros románticos ingleses que encarnan sus visiones y figuras imaginadas y/o exóticas. Lo notable en estas obras -y de nuevo lo que dificulta la participación del lector contemporáneo- es el uso de letras mayúsculas para ciertas palabras. Una en particular es el nombre propio ERIA, por/para quién escribe *«El» y la sombra* y a quien el hablante se dirige. Este procedimiento continúa, trasladándose a otras palabras como EL VIENTO, DADELOS y AMOR. Hay que reconocer que el poeta todavía está buscando su propio medio de revelarse sin caer en lo obvio, lo trillado o lo sentimental.